Region: Africa
Nominee's full name: Lene Overland
Job Title: CEO Orbis Africa and Director of Programme Europe, Middle East and Africa
Organisation: Orbis
Nominated by: The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust
Represented by: Eleanor Fuller
Seconded by: Orbis

Nominee's statement

The remarkable opportunity to run for the role of Chair of IAPB Africa comes at a time where we are seeing growth in entrepreneurial and cross sector activity targeted at solving large social problems. It also comes at a time when Governments are adjusting their planning to the SDG landscape. As a visionary leader committed to social change and improvement in the lives of the poor I am eager to ensure that we seize the opportunity of creating solutions to eye health through cross sector partnerships.

The eye health sector needs to engage itself fully in the new solution economy where players from business, government, philanthropy and social enterprise join forces to solve social problems and at the same time create public value and new wealth.

In my 9 years at Orbis I have developed in-roads into development organisations and international corporates operating on the African continent that are looking to include eye health on their agenda. I have also invested in strategic advocacy and aligned communications and publicity approaches. These relationships and approaches could be leveraged on a broader scale within IAPB. I am also bringing more than ten years’ experience in the international development sector focused on gender equality and social change prior to joining Orbis.

Understanding the realities of those in hardship is critical to me. I find it imperative to ensure access to the channels of communications for those who would otherwise not
enjoy such a privilege. Lived wisdom continues to serve as the sources from which I develop knowledge, innovative approaches and advocacy messages.

I would serve as Chair with a solid understanding of the IAPB Africa strategy. I chaired the IAPB Africa Advocacy Task Force through the development of the advocacy strategy, through to implementation and emerging success in 5 of the 11 countries where we invested in building strategic advocacy capacity. IAPB Africa must continue to advocate for universal access to eye health through its Human Resources for Eye Health approach and it must broaden this approach to business, philanthropy and social enterprise.

Change demands vision and a real understanding of how to bring together a variety of perspectives and approaches to maximise impact. I offer to IAPB my experience of not only public health and international development, but also advocacy, publicity and fundraising.

In the next four years IAPB needs to set out to contribute to solutions that will have a positive impact on issues such as poverty elimination, gender equality and education. By thinking holistically about our role in blindness prevention, and by acting across sectors to develop new and ideally lower cost models, we will create better solutions to blindness and visual impairment than the previously donor funded ones.

The IAPB’s broad membership in Africa is a great strength and foundation for success. I look forward to working with the whole membership so that together we can continue to increase the impact of IAPB Africa and making a real difference to people across the continent, now and in the future.

Lene Overland